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Review of Native American Architecture.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Native American Architecture. By Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. Maps, illustrations, color photographs, introduction, bibliography, glossary, index. 431 pp. \$50.

Over the past generation, studies of American vernacular architecture have transformed the way we look at the landscape. But not until the publication of Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton's *Native American Architecture* did we have a recent comprehensive exploration of the real roots of American architecture, the buildings, structures, and landscapes of Native Americans. Nabokov and Easton fill this massive gap in scholarship splendidly and their book will be a basic reference in American vernacular architecture for years to come.

Dividing their subject geographically, Nabokov and Easton spend seven of their nine chapters on the architecture of western North America. Within each chapter, the authors identify leading regional building types and construction techniques, discuss the cultural and environmental contexts of their examples, and conclude by describing the meaning of these

architectural forms to today's Native Americans. While major building types such as the pit house and earthlodge dominated the built environment in certain regions, Nabokov and Easton take pains to emphasize tribal variations in these buildings. In addition, they describe less well-known buildings and explain why architectural types like the sweatlodge or tipi appear in different shapes in different regions of the country.

Tying together the different architectural traditions is the book's central theme: Indian people typically "envision[ed] their cosmology in architectural terms (174)." This connection between religion and architecture involved not only the building's exterior but extended into the building itself and the manner and materials with which the building was constructed. Nabokov and Easton's emphasis on the symbiotic relationship between history and architecture is one of the book's most valuable contributions to current scholarship.

Nabokov and Easton bring an impressive array of documentary sources to their study, including an outstanding selection of historic photographs, new and previously published

drawings, and recent photographs of surviving and newly constructed buildings. The photographs certainly attract the general readers the authors want to reach while serving as invaluable ethnographic sources as well.

Few faults exist in this fine book. A concluding chapter could have summarized the authors' main themes. Some of the photographs are poorly reproduced. Regional specialists will find that the authors neglected some minor building types. But considering the book's comprehensive scope, its desire to inform scholars and general readers alike, and the chronological depth of its subject matter, these omissions are of little significance. An outstanding scholarly achievement, *Native American Architecture* is a major contribution to the study of American architecture and Native American history.

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